



A Mountain for a Hero

by Clayton Cochran, VA Central Office

Daniel Johnson may be the most recently-injured veteran participating in this year's Winter Sports Clinic—he was injured just seven months ago—and yet the 23-year-old veteran already looks like a pro on the ski slopes. The double amputee quickly adapted to skiing with his new below-the-knee prostheses. Johnson already knew a little about skiing, having skied in the North Carolina mountains about an hour from his home. "It's nothing like this, though," he said, pointing at the nearby slope. "The smallest run here is like the biggest where I skied before."

Johnson in fact seems to be a natural on skis. Sandy Trombetta, who took Daniel up for his second lesson, and has seen just about everything when it comes to adaptive skiing, was clearly impressed. "I've never seen a person ski as well as Daniel after only one lesson," Trombetta said.

On his experience here so far, Johnson is highly enthusiastic. "I hope that we can get many more vets out here, and I'm going to work on that. I'm thinking of the guy who was in the accident with me, as well as the patient next to me at Walter Reed hospital. They should be ready for this next year and I hope to see them here."

The memory of the accident that changed Johnson's life on August 23 of last year is cloudy. He was serving aboard the USS Blue Ridge, the flagship of the 7th Fleet's commanding admiral,

having boarded the ship on New Year's Eve, 1998, after six months at the surface warfare officer's school at Newport, Rhode Island.

In preparing the ship for leaving the harbor at Pusan, Korea, a tugboat was reeling in a "messenger" line, an inch-and-a-half diameter rope that pulls along an eight-inch diameter cable called a hawser. Ensign Johnson was the safety observer at the aft mooring station when the tug began reeling the line in too fast. A loop of the line tangled around a seaman's leg and dragged him across the deck. His leg went into an opening about eight by 12 inches, and the increasing force of the tug's pull could have pulled the

seaman further into the hole, probably with deadly results. Although Johnson now remembers little of his subsequent actions, he ran to help the entangled seaman. The seaman was released when the rope severed his leg, and four fingers. But by then, the courageous Ensign also became entangled in the



Daniel Johnson gets ready for his second run of the day

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Today's Schedule

WEDNESDAY MARCH 29

(M) -- Marriott Hotel

(S) -- Sheraton Hotel



7-9:00a	Breakfast: Plaza level (M)
7:45a	Skiing Cross Country: Sign up (have weight & height ready for instructor) <i>Staging Area--(M)</i> Stairs Plaza level
8-8:30a	Ski Instructor Meeting: (M) Alpine/Sage Rm
8-11:30a	Fishing
8:15 -11:30a	Skiing Cross Country: <i>Departure</i> Orientation for Visually Impaired
9-11:00a	Rock-Climbing: East of Sheraton Hotel
9-11:30a	Skiing Downhill: <i>Staging Area--Antlers Deck: Ruby</i> Chief, Spell Bound, Bears
9-11:30a	Scuba Diving: (S) Pool
10-11:30a	<u>CEU Educational Workshop:</u> (M) Alpine/Sage "Handcycling for Physically Disabled Populations" presented by David Tostenrude
11-1:00p	Lunch
11:45a	Skiing Cross Country: Sign up (have weight & height ready for instructor) <i>Staging Area--(M)</i> Stairs Plaza level
1-4:00p	Intro to Kayaking (M) Pool
1-3:00p	Rock-Climbing: East of Sheraton Hotel
12:30-3:30p	Skiing Cross Country: <i>Staging Area--(M)</i> Stairs Plaza level Orientation for Visually Impaired
12:30-3:30p	Skiing Downhill: <i>Staging Area--Powder Rock,</i> Teocalli, Big Al's
1-3:30p	Fishing
2-4:00p	Scuba Diving: (S) Pool
2-3:30p	<u>CEU Educational Workshop:</u> (M) Alpine/Sage "Public Speaking without Tears: A Transformational Approach" presented by Francine Berger
2-4:00p	Clay Sculpture Workshop: (M) Plaza Level Presented by visually impaired veteran, Michael Naranjo
4:30-6p	Dinner: Plaza level (M)
4:30p	Team Leader Meeting: (S) Slate River Room
5:30-7:00p	<u>CEU Educational Workshop:</u> (M) Alpine/Sage "The House Passed It; The President Signed It; It's Now the Law: HR 1568, The Veteran Entrepreneur Bill" presented by Urban Miyares
7:00p	<u>CEU Educational Workshop:</u> (M) Alpine/Sage "Adaptive Sports for the Disabled; The Road to Self Actualization" presented by Dr. Jule Moravec
	<u>Instructional Workshop:</u> (M) Plaza Level "Self Defense for the Physically Disabled" presented by Special Agents Mark Camillo & Thomas Slone, United States Secret Service
9-Midnight	Talent Show: Rafters

—"Hero" Con't.—

line and both of his legs were severed below the knee.

"That's all a little fuzzy," he says now. When asked the inevitable question "How does it feel to be seen as a hero?" Johnson replies, "That's the number one question that people ask. I don't know...other people call me a hero...it's kind of a hard title to accept. If people can look at what happened and what I did and see that as a good thing, then I guess it's ok to call me a hero." Apparently the military agrees. The Secretary of the Navy presented Johnson with the Navy and Marine Corps Medal for his courageous and decisive action to save his fellow seaman.

Johnson credits his physical therapist and others at Walter Reed for his quick adaptation to his prostheses.

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Forecast for Wednesday

Cloudy with snow today. Winter has returned so pull out the long underwear and head for the mountain!

Today's High: 35
Tonight's Low: 15

Ask Dr. Bob



Dear Dr. Bob:

I went fly fishing for the first time yesterday and had the damndest time getting those little flys on the hook. They kept buzzing around and their little wings kept falling off. Instead, I got lots of hooks in my fingers. How do I get these things out?

—No Fear of Flying

Dear No Fear:

Remind me to never take you fishing with me. There are two ways to get fish hooks out: if it's just the tip that's in your skin, simply pull it out. If the barbs have gone in, you can either push the hook through until the barbs appear, cut off the barbs and then pull the rest out—or go to an emergency room and have someone do it for you. Either way, you probably should see a doctor to get a tetanus shot.

Actually it's more likely to get hooked when you're unhooking a fish or when you're casting and hook someone behind you. You, however, seem to be an exception to the rule.

The bottom line when fly fishing: make sure your hook doesn't get caught in your fly.

Dear Dr. Bob:

I've been faithfully reading your column this week. I know you said not to use beer, whisky, vodka or gin in the humidifier. Can I use rum?

—Buzz Overdeck

Dear B.O.:

HELL NO!!! That's alcohol abuse! What the hell is the matter with you? Do not use any alcohol of any type, strength, color, shape or form in your humidifier. Period. End of conversation. The End. Finito.

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—“Hero” Con’t.—

“Once I got the fit right and regained the strength in my legs, it all came back pretty quick,” he added. He continues his rapid recovery and therapy at the Durham, North Carolina, VA Medical Center.

Johnson's future plans include moving to Washington, where he hopes to work on Senator Max Cleland's staff.

When last seen on the morning of this interview, Johnson slid down a banister at Rafters, jumped a two-foot-high snowbank, and was headed once again to the high slopes, where more skiing awaited him, and an on-slope interview with the television program *Dateline*. Stay tuned...this is one hero to watch.

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Are Vets Going to the Dogs?

by Clayton Cochran

If you want to see veterans' eyes light up at the Clinic, catch the dog sledding event. According to Dwayne Vaughn, director of the Clinic's alternative activities program, “When the dog sled takes off at 20 miles an hour, with the dogs barking and the snow flying, there's nothing like the look on those veterans' faces.”

Vaughn added that when the veterans arrive at the sledding site, you see their anticipation and excitement, and maybe even a little fear because they're not exactly sure what's going to happen. The handlers unload the excited dogs and it all generates a lot of electricity for the veterans. The handlers actually have to tie the sleds to a post to keep the dogs from racing off.

The Lucky Cat Dog Sled Company supplies the dogs, dog handlers and two sleds, taking two vets per ride. The rides are long enough to give the veterans a real feel for dog sledding, as well as some real excitement down the first steep hill and around a sharp turn.

A six-year coordinator for the alternative activities program, Vaughn said, “We're

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Odds & Ends

- To all participants and staff: A message board is now situated outside of the Host Room for your use.
- Check out Adaptive Adventures—the “information conduit for the disabled community” at www.adaptive.org. This website is also posting stories and photos from this year’s Clinic.
- **LOST:** A pair of prescription glasses probably left on the Antler Deck. If found please turn into the Host Room or directly to Al Harrison or Patrice Kennedy.



Eats

Lunch (11:00a.m. -

1:00p.m.): Assorted rolls; turkey, ham, roast beef; pita bread with alfalfa sprouts & marinated julienne vegetables; fresh vegetable crudite with dipping sauce; chips; whole fruit; fig bars; assorted sodas

Dinner (4:30p.m. -

6:00p.m.): Caesar salad with courtyons & grated romano cheese; three-bean salad; roast loin of pork with chutney sauce; baked vegetarian fettuccini tetrazinni with mushrooms; eggplant parmesan; fresh seasonal vegetables; boiled parsley potatoes; rolls & butter; coffee, tea and iced tea

Breakfast for tomorrow (7:00a.m. - 9:00a.m.):

Sliced fresh fruit; assorted dry cereals and granola; Oatmeal; cheese blintzes with warm apple & maple sauce; sausage & bacon; red skinned potatoes with rosemary; country fried biscuits with powdered sugar & apple butter; grits; rolls, muffins & banana nut bread; coffee, tea & chilled juices

Freakin’ Freakascope

Aries — Sweat socks make handy self-defense weapons. They are your friends. Keep them stuffed in your pockets today.

Taurus —Today you drop everything the moment you read this and scramble for the nearest cutie and jacuzzi.

Gemini —“New York is where I’d rather play...I get allergic smelling hay...”

Cancer — You fear you may be schizophrenic. You are, you’re not. I am, I’m not. Who are you? Who me? Not you. Am not. Who’s on first? Am not.

Leo—This is your lucky day. That is if you tell 250 people that this is your lucky day. You must do this by 9 p.m. or you will lose the luck. Then, to seal the luck, they have to tell 250 people, and they have to tell 250, and so on...

— “Dogs” con’t.—

trying to give veterans a chance to do something that they ordinarily might not be able to do at home. We hope they’ll get to like a sport, improve themselves at it and open up some new doors in their lives.”

We think this program gives veterans a lot to bark about!



Virgo—Put your right rigger in, put your right rigger out...you’ll do the hokey pokey today. All together now. (Not recommended on the chair lift).

Libra—You will fall down, you will get up, you will fall down, get up, eh...then you fall down. It’s a gravity thing.

Scorpio —Crested Butte treasure map magically appears this morning when tablecloth is soaked with milk, orange juice and pancake syrup.

Sagittarius —Stars, friends in agreement--you’re ugly and your mother dresses you funny.

Capricorn —You don’t have anything nice to say today. You may sit by me.

Aquarius —Meteor shower in your sign tonight predicts bad attack of dandruff tomorrow.

Pisces—Contrary to popular belief, sweater and belly-button fuzz is edible. You prove it to the world today.

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